

# Texas Caissons Alumni Association

Dedicated to Serving the University of Texas Army ROTC Program

September 2003

www.txcaissons.org

Edition 2003-2

## CURRENT CAISSONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Caissons Board of Directors currently consists of the dedicated folks shown below. Also shown is the year in which their term expires.

Ernie Banasau - 2003	Roger Booker - 2004	Andy Hebert - 2005
Jim Landrum - 2003	Bob Smylie - 2004	Frank Henderson - 2005
Keith Maxie - 2003	Steve Stevenson - 2004	Lawson Magruder III - 2005
Kathleen Meilahn - 2003		

## CURRENT CAISSONS OFFICERS

President: Keith Maxie	Corresponding Secretary: Greg Choban
Vice President: Lawson Magruder III	Recording Secretary: John Boswell
Treasurer: Bob Smylie	Historian: Jim Landrum

## LIFE MEMBER HONOR ROLL

PMS Robert P. Higley	1966 BG (Ret) Robert L. Herndon	1972 Philip Winnsborough
PMS David Sain	1967 Keith Maxie	1972 MG Raymond Barrett
PMS LTC Brian Cooper	1967 Edwin Dorn	1974 Brian Shivers
PMS Cadre LTC Matt Faddis	1967 Bob Binder	1976 Ernest Banasau, Jr.
1951 James Sutton	1968 Preston C. Hunt	1976 Charles P. Busbey
1952 Bob Hallmark	1968 Greg Choban	1980 George Soriano, Jr.
1952 Ross Blumentritt	1969 Charles Baker	1980 COL Robert Roach, Jr.
1955 Robert A. Bell	1969 Gary Gosdin	1985 Albert Lara
1955 Frank Moody	1969 Bruce G. Luna	1988 MAJ Rene Rodriguez
1957 Gary Hite	1969 LTG (Ret) Lawson Magruder III	1990 MAJ Kathleen Meilahn
1958 Andy Hebert	1969 Michael Moran	1990 Michelle McCassey
1958 Donald L. Carmichael	1969 James Shaw	1991 Katherine Graef
1962 Thomas Knapp	1969 James Smith	1992 David S. Dougherty
1964 W. Keith Setzer	1969 Robert P. Smylie	1994 CPT Sherri Shadrock
1964 Gregory Wene	1970 Ward T. Blacklock	1995 CPT Brett Jackson
1964 MG (Ret) Frank Henderson	1970 Joe Gonzales	1995 Steve Sin
1964 Herbert Evans	1970 Manuel Nunes	2002 LT Jennifer Rossie
1965 John Seawell	1971 William Knox	

## ANNUAL CAISSONS SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED to THREE CADETS

At the recent annual Texas Exes Scholarship Awards banquet, the Caissons awarded three scholarships to worthy Cadets. Here are this year's recipients:

Russell Steindam Memorial Scholarship was awarded to **Cadet Natalie McBurney**

Ward Blacklock Memorial Scholarship was awarded to **Cadet Rosa Cavazos**.

Tommy Pham Memorial Scholarship was awarded to **Cadet Daniel Cowan**.

This year was the first for award of the Tommy Pham Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship, in memory of Second Lieutenant Tommy Pham, Class of 1998, was made possible by a generous donation from Tommy's widow, Ms. Maria Truong.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND ELECTIONS

Our annual membership meeting and election of officers is scheduled for October 18, 2003 at 1100 HRS at the UT ROTC Building. Nominees are as follows:

President: George Soriano

Vice President: Lawson Magruder III  
Treasurer: Bob Smylie  
Corresponding Secretary: Steve Stevenson  
Recording Secretary: John Boswell  
Historian: Jim Landrum

### **Annual BAR-B-QUE**

The annual Caissons Bar-B-Que will be held three hours before kickoff of the Texas Tech football game (Nov 15<sup>th</sup>) at the UT ROTC Building. We are looking at some very distinguished guests and many, many cadets and former cadets. Come join us in meeting these wonderful young people and the new PMS and in supporting the UT ROTC program.

### **HOOK 'EM**

'nuff said!



### **WEB SITE**

Hooray... our web site established and operational. It's a work in progress, but its up and running. A very special thanks to Joe Gonzales for taking the lead in this project. Also thanks to Bob Smylie for having some of his folks actually build the site and for hosting it. Thanks also to Roger Booker who coordinated the effort to design the homepage and other graphics. Take a look at: <http://www.txcaissons.org>.

### **CAISSONS DUES REMINDER**

Thanks to those of you who have paid their membership dues. If you are not in that august group, please take a moment and do so. Annual dues are \$25. We offer a 3 for 2 special that allows you to pay for three years' membership for the equivalent of two. The total is \$50. The Board recently approved the creation of a Joint Life Membership category, pegged at \$??? per couple. A dues form is on the last page of this newsletter. Remember that we are a totally voluntary organization, so 100% of your dues go to assisting the UT Army ROTC Department, primarily through emergency loans and scholarships to cadets. Thank you for your continued support.

### **PAST FIVE YEARS ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

If you have just joined us or been too busy to remember what the Caissons have accomplished in the past few years, here is a look at just a few of our contributions to the UT Army ROTC program. In the years **1995 through 2000:**

1. The Caissons Scholarship Fund was established as an endowed fund, managed by the Texas Ex-Students Association.
2. Since September 1996 annual Caissons Scholarships have been awarded to eleven cadets.
3. Emergency Loans, zero interest, were provided to 17 cadets, for a total of \$ 8,730.81.
4. Presented \$450 in Book Scholarships to cadets.

5. Care Packages sent to 142 Longhorn cadets at ROTC Basic and Advanced Summer Camps.
6. Make annual specific contributions towards Cadet Events.
7. Published 21 editions of this Caissons Newsletter for members and potential members.
8. Provided a Caissons representative and presented Caissons membership certificates at 21 different commissioning ceremonies.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

11 OCT 2003	1300 HRS	Kick Some OU Butt!!!!	Cotton Bowl
18 OCT 2003	1100 HRS	Annual General Meeting	UT ROTC Building
15 NOV 2003	TBD	Caissons BBQ	ROTC Building 3 hrs prior kickoff UT vs TT

### **PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE – KEITH MAXIE**

This is my last opportunity to write to you as President of the Caissons Board. I’d like to use this opportunity to thank all of the members, friends, cadets, and cadre who have contributed their time and support to the Caissons during my three years as President. Through their efforts, we have continued to perform our sole mission—that is, to lend our support to the Longhorn Battalion.

The greatest pleasure I’ve experienced during my membership in the Caissons (since 1991) and especially during the past few years as President is in receiving feedback from alumni regarding their lives after ROTC. I’ve heard stories from folks who took diverse paths from the classrooms and parade fields of the “40 acres”—paths that led to success in all types of professions. I’ve relished the accomplishments of friends like Lawson Magruder, Frank Henderson, and Ray Barrett whose careers in the military led them to important positions as General Officers. I’ve kept close tabs on Ed Dorn, whose exceptional intellect and keen grasp of governmental affairs led him to serve as Under Secretary of Defense and now Dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Then, there have been guys like me who served full careers and are translating their successes in the military to success in public and private sector jobs. I’ve heard from former cadets who are still on active duty or in Reserve Component assignments—all serving well and successfully. The majority of our fellow ROTC alumni chose non-military career paths. The leadership traits, work ethic, patriotism, and desire to serve that led them to become our cadet cohorts, served them well in their careers as politicians, judges, physicians, lawyers, engineers, insurance representatives, etc. Every time I hear from or about a Longhorn Battalion graduate, I’m reminded that the ROTC program is about developing **leaders**--not just military leaders.

We’ve enjoyed the increased participation of more recent—a euphemism for “not as old as I am”--graduates on the Board and in other key planning roles. They have brought enthusiasm, energy, and fresh ideas to the organization.

We have received tremendous support to our scholarship program through increased contributions by our members and increased matching from our employers. USAA continues to match Steve Stevenson’s contributions. This year, Nancy Kudla (Chairman and CEO of the dNovus Group) matched the contributions that Greg Choban and I made to the scholarship fund. As you read earlier in the newsletter, Maria Truong made a \$10,000 contribution in the name of her late husband, Second Lieutenant Tommy Pham, a graduate of the Class of 1998.

Hook ‘em. Keith Maxie ([kmaxie@austin.rr.com](mailto:kmaxie@austin.rr.com)).

### **REMEMBRANCES – John BOSWELL**

This is the fifth in a series of features highlighting careers of former AROTC cadets. This edition’s story is that of our friend, John Boswell:

Greg Choban asked me to contribute a piece to the newsletter on my ROTC and Army experiences, so here goes. I entered UT as a freshman in 1964 and enrolled in Army ROTC a year later. Why, you say? I’m not sure. At least in part, it was due to my distaste for the growing number of pro-Viet Cong leftists on campus. Wearing the uniform was certainly a way of getting back at them. There were several confrontations over the years that followed, the most notable being in the fall of 1966. The hippies had attempted to disrupt Thursday drill, and several had been introduced to M1s’ butt ends; after drill, several hundred of us decided to have lunch en masse in the Chuckwagon, a hippie hangout in the Union. We had lunch all right, and in the process cleared out the hippies, many having just returned from their demonstration against us.

On a less confrontational note, my four years of ROTC were most memorable for the many close friendships, especially through involvement in a military fraternity, Praetorian Guard, which sadly no longer exists. Among our duties was to raise the Southwest Conference flags at Memorial Stadium the morning of each home game. In 1968 before the Arkansas

game, we raised all the pig flags upside down. It took several calls (threats?) from the UT Athletic Dept. before we returned to turn them right side up. Oh, by the way, the Horns won that one.

Graduation and commissioning in 1969 as a QMC second lieutenant, a year in the states (Ft. Lee and Red River Army Depot), and on December 26, 1970, Vietnam here I come. After reading recent Vietnam combat remembrances of Caissons Stevenson and Smylie, the war stories of a Quartermaster officer will sound pretty tame. My first assignment was a lovely spot called Phu Tai in the Central Highlands approximately 40 miles west of Qui Nhon. The unit was a PDO company (as in property disposal...as in getting rid of junk the Army no longer wanted). I was honored with the duties of company XO, perimeter defense officer, ammunition control officer, character guidance officer, and venereal disease control officer. As perimeter defense officer, I often had to explain to the troops in the gun towers why they must do or die to defend discarded war materiel. This taxed my ingenuity.

The Phu Tai VC (aka the gang that couldn't shoot straight) lobbed a few mortar rounds and B-40 rockets into our junkyard, usually every other Saturday. We figured it must be part of their weekend training schedule; and given that they never killed any of our troops and only wounded four during my time there, we also figured that they must have been drunk.

A highlight of the six months in PDO was the Red Cross telegram received on Jan. 20, 1971, stating that my wife, Anne, had given birth to our first child, Sarah. Sarah is now the mother of three bouncing babies.

In June 1971 I was transferred to a Class I (food supply) company in Qui Nhon which is a port city with some architectural remnants left from the French colonial period. This was definitely a step up from Phu Tai, which had not yet emerged from the Neolithic agricultural revolution. I was responsible for the requisition, supply, and issuance of cold storage items. This was a time when the Vietnamization strategy saw a great many US combat units departing Vietnam. Obviously the amount of food requisitioned was dependent on anticipated troop strength several months out. In August, a Spec. 4 with the 173<sup>rd</sup>, which we supplied, told me the word was all over LZ English that the 173<sup>rd</sup> was going home soon. A week later I was in Long Binh to review II Corp's future cold storage food needs. I told the LTC in charge that I'd heard the 173<sup>rd</sup> was going home, and if true, that would cut our food needs by ~50%. He rather preemptorily blew me off, so I ordered enough food to take care of the needs of the 173<sup>rd</sup> for the next six months. A month or so later came the official word that the 173<sup>rd</sup> was indeed going home, too late to stop all the food now in the pipeline to Qui Nhon. Hence, when I went home in October, our warehouse was still crammed full of unneeded food, and I suspect the communist Peoples' Army is still force issuing the overage to their units. I've often wondered where that LTC is now...probably in charge of the Baylor public relations department.

Well, thanks to President Nixon and Vietnamization, I got orders to come home ~45 days earlier than expected. The last few days were spent at Cam Rahn Bay, the place where I had first been dropped off the previous year. Back then, one of the first people to greet me was Greg Choban of Praetorian Guard fame. He was on his way home, and I had 300+ days to go. This did not make me happy. Now 10 ½ months later, life was much improved.

To condense the next 3 decades in a few sentences, a 30 year stint as a bank loan officer in Dallas and San Antonio, a son born in 1975, and full time college teaching of world and US history for the past 3 years. And most importantly of all, 35 years of marriage to Anne Louise Boswell. Our best man, Knox Bishop, and two member of the wedding party, Bill Knox and Bob Smylie, were all in Praetorian Guard, and Bill and Bob are Caissons board members and officers. Hard to believe we're still involved in UT AROTC after so long.

I was fortunate to have been a founding member of the Texas Caissons and refer you to Colin Powell's autobiography [My American Journey](#) having to do with his ROTC days and sorrow over his alma mater's decision to scrap ROTC:

“When I returned to school (CCNY) in the fall of 1954, I inquired about the Reserve Officers Training Corps, and I enrolled in ROTC. I am not sure why. Maybe it was growing up in World War II and coming of age during the Korean conflict...All these images were burned into my consciousness during my most impressionable years. Or maybe it was the common refrain of that era—you are going to be drafted anyway, you might as well go in as an officer...

My experience in high school...had never produced a sense of belonging or many permanent friendships. [ROTC] and the Pershing Rifles did...We [ROTC cadets] were out of sync with both the student radicals and the conservative engineering

majors...The discipline, the structure, the camaraderie, the sense of belonging were what I craved...If this was what soldiering was all about, then maybe I wanted to be a soldier...

We all still remain in touch...Some who stayed in were killed in Vietnam. Most of those who did not remain in the military have been successful...Vietnam also killed the ROTC program and the Pershing Rifles at CCNY in the early seventies, which I deeply regret. Not only did our citizen Army lose a special kind of officer...but we have denied to these young people an opportunity to maintain structure in their lives and to make a useful contribution to their country. Too bad.”

Caissons’ support of UT AROTC will help ensure that the epitaph “Too bad” will never apply to the Longhorn Battalion.

## **LETTERS FROM THE FIELD**

We are asking our men and women on active duty to send in letters we can share with you.

A Caisson's Daughter Grows Up

Or

Following in Dad's Footsteps

By 1LT Christy Gonzales and COL (R) Joe Gonzales

I am using this article to share a story as a proud father, but also to challenge other Caissons to share your stories that may be of interest with the rest of us. I graduated and was commissioned at the University of Texas on May 1970. I was in the Infantry Company of the Longhorn Battalion, but as a DMG I was able to select MSC as my branch. I retired in September 1999 after 29 plus years of active duty.

I had some great assignments, one of which was as the first MSC PMS for Cadet Command. I was the PMS for the last class at Trinity University, San Antonio, TX and the Roadrunner Battalion at UTSA. I served as the Camp Commandant for the Ft. Lewis Advanced camp during 1993, and it was one of my most rewarding and fun assignments. I say all this as an introduction to the fact that my daughter went on to join the Bobcat Battalion at SWTSU and was commissioned in the MP Corps in May 2001. I was honored to be the guest speaker at their commissioning ceremony.

After MP Officer's Basic, Christy (my daughter) was assigned as a platoon leader to the 21<sup>st</sup> MP Company at Ft Bragg, N.C.. Christy's unit was deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan around June 2002, and she and her unit returned home safely in Mid-December. Her unit was responsible for running the detention facility at Kandahar, and various other duties "as assigned". The following are excerpts from a letter that she sent to a cousin who wanted to share a story with her elementary school students. I hope you enjoy this, and realize it was written for small children. It is hard to realize my baby girl has grown up, gone to a war-zone, and I'll be giving her away in marriage next month!

1LT Christy Gonzales' Letter to an Elementary School Class:

I'll start my letter by telling you a little about me and my job as a Military Police Officer. I am a 1LT stationed at Ft. Bragg, NC, Home of the Airborne-that means in addition to our regular jobs, we jump out of airplanes. If it was ever necessary to assault by air they would send us in. (Think Band of Brothers, without all the gunfire-however it is always possible). I am in charge of 33 Military Police Soldiers. Ft. Bragg is one of the most highly deployable locations, meaning whenever something bad in the world happens, we are one of the first places they send troops from.

As a Military Police Officer (MP's) we do a number of things that regular Police Officers would never do, which is why there are a lot of Reserve or National Guard Soldiers that are both civilian Police officers and MPs. MP's are involved in every step of a conflict process, the before: initial security of an area, the during: the conflict, the after: peace keeping operations. Our jobs involve Law and Order (just like regular cops), Detainee Operations (running the jail for bad people like the Al Qaeda/Taliban), Area Security (presence patrols), Police Intelligence Operations (going on site to collect information about the situation at hand), Maneuver Mobility and Support Operations (make routes and secure those convoys that go through them, as well as ensure the traffic flows and there are no accidents from people going the wrong way or from getting lost. In Afghanistan we conducted all of these types of operations, sometimes we did several of them at the same time. There was never a dull moment-always very busy.

My unit was at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan. Our living conditions were not too bad. It was like camping on the beach in tents, but for 6months. We did have showers, a dining facility (a dining tent), and a tent with make shift weights and

workout equipment. At Kandahar we were directly responsible for the safety and security of the entire Airfield and the 10,000 soldiers that were also there on the base camp. Not only were there American soldiers, but soldiers from Britain, New Zealand, Canada, and Romania. We also "housed" all the bad guys in our detention facility (suspected Al Queda and Taliban) before they went to the other higher security facilities like Bagram and Guantanamo. We conducted Area Security, by doing presence patrols around the surrounding villages and often talked to the village elders and children through an interpreter.

Through it all I learned alot about the military and how they operate in a war time situation. Being in a third world country made me really appreciate the United States and the freedom and society we live in everyday. We are very fortunate people to be able to just live our lives and go to school and our jobs without anyone telling us where to go and how we can dress and what we can eat. The people of Afghanistan are very happy to see the Taliban go-they are very bad people and the country's people are a lot better off now because of what the Army is doing over there. Please continue to send packages and continue to say your prayers for our safety, it means so much to soldiers like myself.

Thank You.

Patsy, Hope this helps shed a little light! Let me know if your students want addresses to write soldiers. Love ya, miss ya,  
Christy

# Texas Caissons Alumni Association Membership/Scholarship Form

Here is your opportunity to join and help. Please complete and return with your payment to the Texas Caissons address below.

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To: The Texas Caissons Alumni Association, Inc.

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First Name                      MI                                      Last Name                                      SSAN

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Street Address                      City                                      State                                      Zip

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(    )                                      (    )  
Work Phone                                      Home Phone                                      E-mail                                      UT Class year

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Signature    Date

\*\*\*\*\*

## Caissons Scholarship Fund

I will help:      Caissons Scholarship Contribution                                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

**Scholarship checks payable to The University of Texas.**  
Corporate Matching Funds form attached (if applicable)

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## Caissons Membership Dues (2003)

**Caissons dues payable to The Texas Caissons.**

Caissons Life Membership	\$ 250.00	_____
Caissons Annual Membership dues	\$ 25.00	_____
Caissons 3 for 2 Dues Membership	\$ 50.00	_____

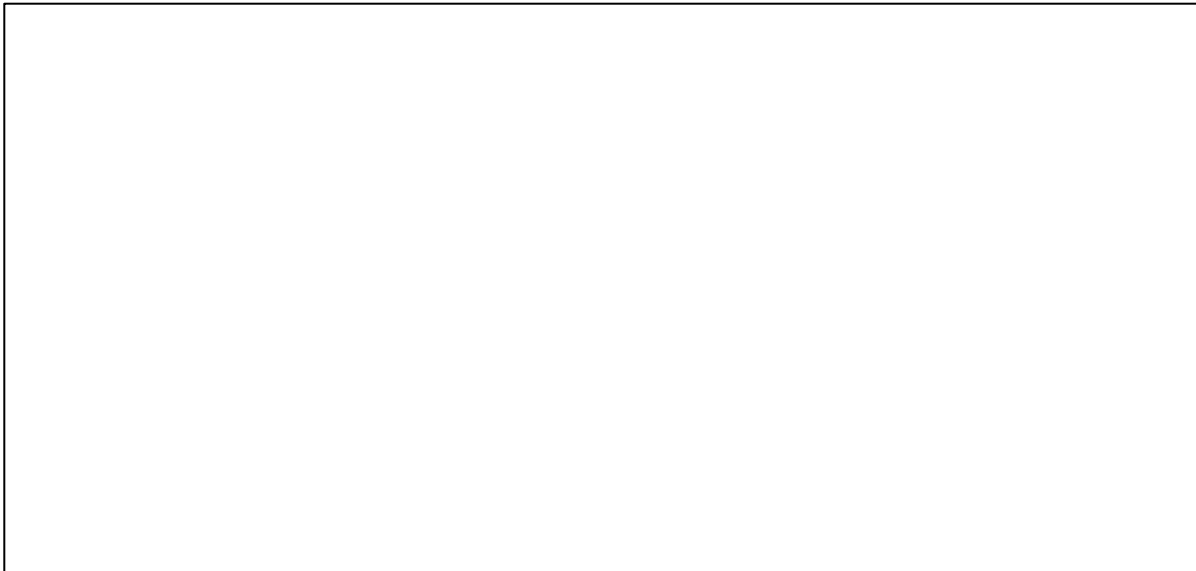
Please check one.

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**The Texas Caissons Alumni Association Inc.**  
**RAS Hall, Room 110**  
**The University of Texas**  
**Austin, Texas 78712-1182**

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